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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (8/13): Palestinian insistence on Israeli withdrawal to 1967 borders

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Main Stories:  
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All dailies report that the body of the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish will be buried today in Ramallah. Al-Quds writes, "the body of Mahmoud Darwish will be buried today [August 13] in the homeland," while Al-Ayyam leads with the headline, "Ramallah is getting ready to embrace Darwish's body...today", and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida writes in large black letters, "Ramallah is holding today the funeral of the great poet Mahmoud Darwish." The three dailies report that the body of Darwish will arrive first in Jordan and will then be brought to the Presidential compound in Ramallah at noon. Palestinian officials will attend the funeral, which will be open to the public. The Palestinian Prime Minister, Salam Fayyad, travelled to Jordan to receive Darwish's body and escort it to Ramallah. Al-Ayyam leads with a photo of Darwish's burial site near the Cultural Palace in Ramallah. Al-Hayat Al-Jadida shows a photo of Darwish's body being placed on an airplane at Houston airport for repatriation to the West Bank.

All dailies report that Israel plans to establish Jewish synagogues at the Al-Maghrabi Gate in Jerusalem's Old City and to take control of the area around the Al-Aqsa Mosque and turn it into a public square. The Head of the Islamic Movement, Sheikh Ra'ed Salah, reportedly submitted original documents revealing these Israeli plans to the Presidential Counselor for Jerusalem Affairs, Hatem Abdul Qader, during a press conference in Jerusalem on August 12.

All the dailies carry news of a peace proposal reportedly offered to President Abbas by Prime Minister Olmert during their meeting last week. According to this proposal, reported in the Israeli daily Ha'aretz, Israel would withdraw from 93% of the West Bank once the Palestinian Authority (PA) regained control over the Gaza Strip. The Israeli suggestion also reportedly addresses the issue of

Palestinian refugees [although no details are provided] but defers the question of Jerusalem to a later time. The Palestinian Authority has denied the Ha'aretz report and the Palestinian Chief Negotiator, Dr. Sa'eb Erekat, said in a phone interview with Al-Quds from London that the information is untrue and that the Palestinians want an Israeli withdrawal from 100% of the West Bank. When asked about the visit of the U.S. Secretary of State on August 20, he confirmed that the meeting would take place on that date and added that the Palestinians are trying to arrange an Israeli-American-Palestinian meeting on August 21 to confirm the Palestinian commitment to comprehensive peace and fulfillment of the Roadmap. The official spokesperson of the PA Presidency, Nabil Abu Rudayna, said on August 12 that the Palestinians would not accept anything less than the 1967 borders.

Al-Quds reports that Egypt will start inviting the Palestinian factions to Cairo next week to start a [Palestinian] national dialogue, according to remarks made by an Egyptian official in an interview with Al-Quds on August 12. In related coverage in Al-Hayat Al-Jadida, a member of the Executive Committee of the PLO, Dr. Zakariya Al-Agha, called on Hamas, in a TV interview with Ramattan on August 12, to sit at the negotiating table and start a dialogue with President Mahmoud Abbas.

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Al-Quds ran its daily editorial entitled, "This Israeli deceitful

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'proposal'"(8/13): "The report that captured the front page of the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz yesterday, about a map that Olmert submitted to the Palestinian Authority in order to draw the final borders between the future Palestinian state and Israel, has no basis according to reliable Palestinian sources and is meant to launch a game of holding Palestinians responsible for not accepting the 'generous offer' of 93% of the West Bank in addition to 5.5% of the Negev Desert close to the Gaza Strip. The report is full of deceitful tricks. For example, this plan will not be implemented unless the Palestinian Authority regains control over the Gaza Strip, while these big settlement units will remain part of Israel as soon as the plan is agreed upon. The expansion of these settlements will be allowed...and the safe crossing between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip will be included in the portion that will be returned to the Palestinian Authority even though Israel will retain legal and security authority over the crossing. The Palestinian response to this report was quick and definite. The withdrawal of the Israeli military and Israeli settlements from the Palestinian territories of 1967 should be comprehensive and complete. And there is no possibility whatsoever [for Israel] to annex these lands for settlements ... It is better for Israel and the peace process to respond to the Palestinians' just demands and to international legitimacy...because a just peace cannot be based on imposing facts by force, but on solutions that the Palestinians agree to..."

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